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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses issues related to the recruitment of Hispanic-American educational leaders, focusing on the El Centro de Recursos Educativos outreach center at Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago, which began operation in Fall 1997. It examines the characteristics of successful programs for Hispanic recruitment and retention and the demographics of the Hispanic student population. Among other things, the El Centro program offers courses taught bilingually in Spanish and English and a new, 36-credit school leadership master's degree for teachers. The paper outlines current recruitment strategies for Hispanic students and teachers and recommends the following strategies: (1) public service announcements; (2) direct Hispanic community contacts; (3) professional bilingual publications; (4) written notifications to school districts; (5) delivering information through teachers' school meetings; (6) using the Internet; (7) using current students as recruiters; and (8) open house events. Current challenges and future directions of the program are also addressed. (Contains 20 references.) (MDM)

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Outreach To Future Hispanic Educational Leaders

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Rationale

An examination of the U.S. population trends cannot ignore the fact that Hispanics will be the largest minority group by the year 2010. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (1995), the Hispanic share of the minority labor force is also increasing. By the year 2000, individuals of Hispanic origin will be the second largest minority group across upper, middle, and lower job spectrums. In 1992, the Bureau of the Census reported differences in the age structure of the nation's racial and ethnic minorities. The data was very striking: Hispanic populations yield a younger age profile, with a higher birth rate and a lower life expectancy. Another interesting fact is that minorities account for an increasing share of the nation's children. The bureau confirmed that by 2035 fifty-one percent of all children under age 18 will be either Asian, Hispanic, African American, or American Indian. Recently, the National Council of La Raza projected that by the year 2005 Hispanics (Latinos) will be the second largest minority group in the United States (20%). Currently, one in 10 U.S. inhabitants is Latino. It is obvious that rapidly changing demographics will cause changes and innovations in our educational paradigms.

This dramatic change in American demographics has forced government institutions to rethink ways to deliver education. Guidelines for school redesign and reform were established by the Presidential Task Force on Psychology in Education, under the auspices of the American Psychological Association, in 1993. This study reinforces the value of social and cultural

diversity and the quality of personal relationships in learning. The task force indicated that school programs in the U. S. should consider diversity in the classroom, which means avoiding single programs, standards, and learning goals, for all learners. It asserted that teaching programs must prepare teachers to connect instructional content and process to the cultural context of their students, and that policies should be based on legal foundations to ensure the empowerment of both teachers and students.

Educators concerned with the growing diversity in the student population have reinvented paradigms to shape their teaching strategies and techniques to the new educational reality. These models address to the diversity among students and use it to enrich learning and produce results within the context of current school reform.

Higher education institutions share in and implicitly recognize the value of diversity. Owens (1997) reinforces that organizational environments must accept that not only do individuals differ from one another but that this diversity can be a source of great strength to organizations. Thus, by understanding how different people react to various learning environments, and the support provided in those environments, one can comprehend the evolution of recruitment approaches proposed by colleges and universities inviting culturally diverse individuals to join their ranks.

The following study addresses the issue of the recruitment of Hispanic students. Here, the definition of an Hispanic corresponds to that of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget which indicates that an Hispanic is a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race. The setting of this study is Chicago, a multicultural city in which 114 languages are spoken, and Hispanics of many races

are heavily concentrated. There are 1,051, 000 Latinos in Illinois (NCLR, 1977) primarily in Chicago which is one of the largest locations in the U.S. facing such rapid growth in the Hispanic population that their presence is causing changes in job structure, job opportunities, government services, private practices, educational endeavors, economic developments, technological options, health policies.

Recruiting Minorities

The Minority recruitment and retention programs have always posed a dilemma for colleges and universities. The degree of aggressiveness and consistency of these programs differ. With regard to Hispanic recruitment programs, research studies jump from extremely aggressive to mild approaches. Martha de Acosta (1996), after conducting an in-depth analysis of 15 programs, identified common characteristics of successful programs for Hispanic recruitment and retention. The seven key features are: (1) sensitivity to individual students, (2) sensitivity to students' culture, (3) sensitivity to the institution where the program is located, (4) pro-active interventions, (5) focus on accelerated, enriched learning, (6) small program size, and (7) partnering with family and community.

There are diverse strategies that institutions use for recruiting minorities. In a study conducted by Opp and Smith (1995), vice-presidents of student affairs were asked to identify minority recruitment strategies and barriers to recruitment. Top strategies cited included (1) establishing a line of communication with guidance counselors in minority high schools, (2) college admission staff visiting minority high schools, (3) articulating programs with minority high schools, (4) directing college scholarships toward minority students, and (5) scheduling admissions and financial aid seminars for minority youth. On the other hand, the barrier most

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frequently found were: (1) low high school completion rates among minorities, (2) the confusion of prospective minority students regarding the options and benefits of higher education, (3) low expectations communicated by parents, teachers and peers, and (4) the perception that the recruitment of minority students is time consuming and labor intensive.

Hispanic Student Status

Hispanic groups are responding positively to adverse social forces. To a great extent, Hispanic communities expect to live in a democratic society in which they can participate in the political process, and exercise choice in the schooling of their children. However, data reported by *Hispanic Outlook in Higher Education* (1997) tells us that Latinos have the highest school drop-out rate and lowest college enrollment rates of all students, and that Latino children are twice as likely to be living in poverty (41%) as are non-Hispanic children (20%). The percentage of Hispanics decreases noticeably from school to college. Richard Valencia (1997) has alerted us that the more Latinos grow in numbers, the more they fall behind.

More than one in three Hispanic youths are living in poverty. Most of the public schools attended by Latinos are in segregated inner cities and often have fewer resources, fewer support services, and poorer quality instruction (Valencia, 1997). Despite this fact, the State of California expects, for the first time next fall, that the majority of K-12 students who are non-white will be Latinos (Hurtado, 1997).

It is widely known that demographic data on Hispanic student populations has historically anticipated this minority's continuous growth and expansion. In 1992, La Raza reported that only half of Hispanic adults had graduated from high schools. Orum in 1983, as cited by Zapata (1988), mentioned that only 31% percent of Hispanic high school graduates attended college.

Data from 1992 established that sixty percent of all Hispanics, whose ages ranged between 25 to 44 years old, had graduated from high school, thirty percent had attended college, and ten percent graduated from college.

Hispanic students drop out of elementary, middle and high school, or graduate without adequate preparation and counseling. Community colleges offer the best chance they have to acquire the skills they need to get a better job sooner with the limited resources they have. In 1992, the U.S. Department of Education revealed that 55% of all Hispanics in higher education graduate from community colleges. Nevertheless, Latinos are still underrepresented in these colleges when compared with their representation in the overall U.S. population (Opp and Smith, 1995). A similar inconsistency appears in four-year and graduate colleges. The number of Hispanic students in American higher education has shown little progress since 1985 as is pointed out by the American Council of Education (Hanson, 1992). By contrast, the rate of Hispanic population is progressively increasing questions about where the other Hispanics are going and how to help them succeed.

Equity has become more than just a word. Hispanic voices are demanding not only a better job of teaching Latino students in public schools, but a better job of recruiting and retaining Latinos by colleges and universities (Hurtado, 1997). The 1992 data reflected that this minority group was less likely than any other minority groups to attend or graduate from college. The situation has not improved. At any level of education, except the primary grades, Hispanics tend to decline in enrollment. For example, in Illinois, 1997 data from the National Council of La Raza revealed that 10.5% of Hispanics have completed a college education. In the Chicago public school system, the Spanish speaking group is the largest of ethnic composition (52, 241).

In 1993, fifty-three percent of Chicago's Hispanic youngsters were reported to have completed secondary school (Mendieta, 1997). On standardized tests, bilingual program students tested in Spanish reading and mathematics (about 85% of all participants) ranked above the 50th percentile in their native language (CPS, 1995). In addition, they tended to have a higher daily school attendance rate when compared with citywide and state levels (CPS, 1995). It is important that one of every four Chicago inhabitants is Hispanic and one of every three is of Hispanic origins not surprisingly, the city's demographic composition has obliged colleges and universities to consider planning systematic recruitment programs to serve a growing population about to jump into the 21st century with a much stronger, more solid mentality about the answer to achieving prosperity: education.

Dealing with Reality

Recently, the special issue of *Educational Week*, dated January 8, 1998, projected that U.S. schools will require two million new teachers in the next ten years. Also it reported that educational experts differ on whether the focus on diversity has raised to questions about quality, and that some states are pursuing both goals of enhancing diversity and quality in the urban teaching corps. The article reports some of the strategies that some states have implemented such as accelerated certification, various scholarships, and other proposals, offered to those who agree to teach in schools with high poverty levels and low test scores. Illinois, for example, has made provisions through the Golden Apple Scholars' program to provide money to aspiring educators in exchange for five years of teaching. Also, the Illinois legislature and a Chicago-based private university developed a license valid for teaching only in Chicago to those professionals with other degrees who want to switch to a teaching career.

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In Chicago, bilingual Hispanic teachers are exposed to the public's claims and concerns after standardized tests are used as the measurement of school accountability and effectiveness. In fact, much has been said about their preparation level. They have been targeted as authentic sources of problems (McGee, 1993). Teachers have started responding to these accusations with indignity. One such response is seeking more academic opportunities in which they can demonstrate their leadership skills and abilities. During the school year 1995-96, the Chicago Public Schools advised that Hispanics represented 31.3% of the total student enrollment, 8.7% of the teachers, and 11.2% of the principals. This information demonstrated the urgency for recruiting Hispanic teachers. Fortunately, education is a very popular field of study among undergraduate (Hanson, 1992) or graduate Hispanic students (Chandler, 1988). However, when they are compared with other ethnic groups, Hispanics still represent the lowest percentage of those choosing teaching as a professional career.

The diagnostic of Chicago's reality, consequently, has moved higher education institutions to commence new academic developments to fill the supposed gap. These and other reasons are the among the motives that have compelled Northeastern Illinois University (NEIU), to develop a graduate program with the aim of responding to the leadership needs and administrative goals of Chicago's Hispanic teachers. The University was featured in U.S. News & World Report (August, 1997) best colleges annual issue as number one among Midwestern universities for diversity.

Outreach to Hispanic Teachers

Hispanics, like all learners, need certain environmental conditions which increase their self-esteem in order to favor learning. Research studies on Hispanic behaviors as compared with

Anglo behaviors have identified multiple patterns of differences. In Table 1, some of these patterns are shown:

Table 1

Patterns of Differences between Hispanic and Anglo

Hispanic	Anglo
Values spontaneity	Schedule-orientated
Group identity comes first	Individual identity comes first
Nonverbal communication	Verbal communication
Involvement in concurrent activities	One thing at a time
The presence of others is stimulating	The presence of others is a distraction
Degree of friendship defines level of help	Degree of usefulness defines level of friendliness
Need for direction to initiate structure	Shows initiative, time on task
People count the most	Activity accomplishment count first
Solidarity (interpersonal)	Solitary (intrapersonal)
No complaints to authority	Expect validation of complaints from authority

This comparison between both groups invites us to reformulate and reconsider recruitment programs at the university and college levels. Still, the importance of recruiting does not lie only in proclaiming these differences. Recruitment programs should affirm the importance of being different, express the university's commitment to valuing diversity by viewing it as a solution rather than a problem.

Much behavior that needs changing can be dealt with by letting people know what is expected of them. Any program for college recruitment should convey the importance of going

to college and describe how to stay with it as a mean of achieving success. Ways of doing this include redirecting recruitment activities which develop a sense of belonging in Hispanic students. Chandler (1988) stated that two year colleges have developed programs to prepare minorities with academic ability to obtain bachelor degrees as their first alternative rather than their last.

Programs to improve Hispanic college recruitment, retention and graduation are based on the need to work with high schools, communities and parents (Hanson, 1992). The equation Recruitment - Retention = Success is directly proportional. Recruitment and retention problems are closely related and have to be considered together. Jaramillo (1992) collected opinions about these problems from recruiting and retention agencies, counselors and Hispanic students, both undergraduate and graduate, in order to propose solutions. He stated that in addition to internal and financial problems, the lack of minority faculty and staff as role models, insufficient financial aid, and systemic racism, are factors that favor low recruitment and retention of Hispanics.

Successful recruitment and retention programs outline goals to increase the number of Hispanic teachers and counselors in public schools, community colleges and universities. Many authors agree that Hispanic teachers can become role models as examples of competence. Similarities between teachers and students' backgrounds may endorse and facilitate school's links with parents and communities; moreover, these teachers may be better prepared to meet the learning needs and styles of those students (Zapata, 1988). If in fact a real demand for Hispanic teachers exists, there should be a need for planning educational programs to attract more Hispanics to teaching at all educational levels. In higher education, for example, full-time

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Hispanic faculty represents only 2.3% (ACE, 1996). Any effort at this level must be accompanied by a systematic recruitment and retention program carefully reflecting continued and consistent routines toward expanding both culturally diverse students and faculty members.

In this direction, Northeastern Illinois University has focused on the importance of minority recruitment and retention, especially programs designated to satisfy the urgent need for qualified teachers, adequately prepared for meeting the increasing Hispanic presence.

Creating the Educational Niche

The 1997-98 Annual Report and Profile of Admissions and Records of Northeastern Illinois University gathered information on Hispanics for total Fall enrollment. Notably, it increased from 14% in 1992 to 20% in 1997, almost 1 percent per year. In the same academic period, the percentage of Hispanics seeking an undergraduate degree increased from 17.8% in 1992 to 25% in 1997. From this report, it can be observed that Hispanics graduate students are underrepresented at NEIU. In fact, of the total graduate enrollment in the past three years, only 6.0% to 8.0% are Hispanics.

The NEIU Graduate College Statistical Reports (1995, 1996, and 1997) describing the Fall semester graduating profile, indicate that of a total of 431 who completed a graduate degree, 12 Hispanics majored in education, and six Hispanics other majors. In examining these years, two aspects emerge significantly. First, data confirm the Hispanic preference for teaching careers as previously mentioned. Secondly, the percentage of Hispanic graduate students in education still represents less than 5% of the total of 252 students who completed education at the graduate level.

It is important to point out that Northeastern Illinois University was originally a teacher's

college which later evolved into the College of Education. Traditionally, education majors have been the prevailing career choices. Currently, graduate programs in education contain the highest number of the total graduate student enrollment. Nevertheless, the percentage of Hispanics graduating in education (graduate and undergraduate) does not match the rapidly increasing primary and secondary Hispanic student population city-wide.

Consequently, the university has devised various responses to deal with this need. It has made provisions to serve minority groups in a variety of ways. El Centro de Recursos Educativos is the university's outreach center for the Hispanic-American community. It offers complete sequences permitting students to carry a full academic load during fall and spring semesters, with additional credit hours during the summer. El Centro offers the possibility for Hispanic students to attend courses with instruction and course work taught bilingually in Spanish and English. For the first time in 20 years, this off-campus site houses a graduate education program for Hispanic teachers.

Program Description

The new 36-credit, four-sequence School Leadership program, leading to a Master's degree, or Illinois Type 75 certification, represents a significant shift from the traditional educational administration program. It includes fostering comprehension of leadership theories, total daily school district operations, management of human conflict, culturally diverse populations, etc. An interesting attribute of the program is the Comparative Education course which will be partially offered overseas. The scheme adopted for the development of the course includes comparison and contrast of educational cultures (5 weeks on campus), exposure to the culture (two weeks of exchange), and related experiences (written report). Specifically, for the

School Leadership concentration at El Centro, the plan is to contact Latin American universities in order to carefully coordinate academic interactions, elementary school visits, school official exchanges, financial arrangements, work schedules, living arrangements, and cultural and recreational activities.

Using a Wide Recruiting Lens

The role of the only Hispanic faculty member of the Department of Educational Leadership and Development has included aggressive recruitment. A strategic plan was delineated to design, organize, and implement the selection, screening and recruitment processes. The criteria for the selection called for teachers who possess bilingual abilities, teach in bilingual schools, have a research interest in bilingual education, serve bilingual communities, and want to move into school leadership positions. Strategically, the recruitment avenues taken were printed materials, outreach through mail, the school e-mail network system of the Chicago Public Schools (CPS), websites, direct contact with the Department of Language and Culture of the CPS, bilingual teachers' associations, the teachers's union newspaper, local Hispanic newspapers, school meetings, and school open houses. A note of interest is that each participant in the program has emerged as a Hispanic minority recruiter for the school system, providing the platform of contacts needed to advertise it and enhance minority participation in higher education.

In the Fall of 1997, at the beginning of the program at El Centro, 18 students enrolled in two courses, Research in Educational Administration and Foundations in Educational Leadership. In the Spring of 1998, the number of students enrolled doubled. Currently, thirty - eight Hispanic graduate students are registered in three courses at the El Centro program. Their

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characteristics are as follows: 61% hold a teaching position, 96% are between 31 to 48 years old, 76% are female and 24% male, 81% are married, and 43% have at least 6 years of teaching experiences. Their educational backgrounds vary from 38% bachelor, 52% master, 5% specialty, and 5% doctoral degrees. Sixty two percent estimated their income level at between $ 35,000 to 50,000 annually.

Exploring New Recruitment Horizons

In a recent survey on recruitment issues, graduate students at El Centro were asked to respond to four questions: (1) How were you informed about the School Leadership program at El Centro?, (2) Why did you decide to enroll in this program?, (3) what are three strategies for the recruitment of new Hispanic teachers for the program, and (4) How would you like to be involved in the recruitment process of Hispanic teachers for this program?.

The responses given to the first question varied. Students found out about the program through colleagues, flyers, the program brochure, the El Centro bulletin board, and directly from the professor. There was no hierarchical order of importance given to this list. The answers to the second questions can be classified by (1) campus location and schedule, (2) urgent needs for administrative certification and salary increase, (3) Hispanic cultural environment and networking, (4) sharing of common Hispanic educational goals, (6) expanding knowledge base, and (7) program description.

Following are the strategies recommended for the recruitment of new Hispanic students: (1) public service announcements (T.V., radio, newspaper, school and community newsletters, flyers, brochures), (2) direct Hispanic community contacts, (3) professional bilingual publications, (4) written notifications to school districts and CPS, (5) delivering information

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through teachers' school meetings, (6) using the online CPS system and Internet, and (7) using students as recruiters, and (8) open house at El Centro.

Eighty percent of the current students manifested their interest in participating as recruiters. The degree of involvement differed. Some expressed their decisions to get involved in any recruitment activity, others volunteered to speak and distribute information to schools, and a last group suggested writing bilingual announcements for newspapers and other media sources.

Still to Be Worked On...

Much needs to be done to enhance the processes of recruitment, selection, admission, registration, course offerings, and scheduling at El Centro. Navigating toward our third academic period of experience with this program, some pitfalls of the outreach process have been identified which will these require prompt solutions:

- Refinement of a more articulated graduate minority recruitment plan for students who aspire to become future educational leaders.
- More active faculty participation in the various programs's recruitment activities.
- Utilization of technologically advanced recruitment techniques.
- External funding to provide financial support for minority graduate students majoring in Educational Leadership.
- Implementation of a strategic plan for cultural sensitivity toward Hispanic graduate students or issues.
- Developing an orientation plan for Hispanic students at El Centro which includes more extensive information programs about graduate school, the graduate application process, and the rewards of a graduate education.

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- Improvement of the admission and enrollment processes for new Hispanic graduate students at El Centro.

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